

F

801

.L3

C6



# OCTAVIANO LARRAZOLO

A Political Portrait



32

DIVISION OF RESEARCH  
DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT

## Concerning publications . . .

This study is publication no. 32 of the Division of Research of the Department of Government of the University of New Mexico.

It is the policy of the Division to select for study contemporary subjects of importance to the people of the state, and to make the completed studies available to interested citizens and officials in New Mexico and elsewhere.

Care is taken in each study to gather facts with fullness and accuracy and to draw conclusions with impartiality. No conclusions concerning University policies or views are to be drawn from published studies. Opinions expressed in studies are those of the authors, who accept responsibility for them.

## Personnel . . .

### *Director:*

FREDERICK C. IRION, associate professor of government

### *Associates:*

DOROTHY I. CLINE, assistant professor of government

MIGUEL JORRÍN, director of the School of Inter-American Affairs and professor of government

CHARLES B. JUDAH, professor of government

HOWARD J. McMURRAY, chairman of the department of government and professor of government

ALLAN R. RICHARDS, assistant professor of government

## *Publications out of print:*

1. THE STATE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM, by Thomas C. Donnelly, 1946.
2. SOIL CONSERVATION, by Thomas Donnelly and Paul Beckett, 1946.
3. THE NEW MEXICO STATE BUDGET SYSTEM, by W. J. Parish, 1946.
4. NEW MEXICO'S TAXES, Rupert Asplund and Albert Nohl, 1946.
5. NEW MEXICO: YESTERDAY AND TODAY, by Frank D. Reeve, 1946.
6. PUBLIC SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND SCHOOL COSTS IN NEW MEXICO, by R. J. Mullins and E. H. Fixley, 1946.
8. PROPERTY VALUES IN BERNALILLO, by E. H. Plank, 1947.
11. PUBLIC LANDS IN NEW MEXICO, by Jack E. Holmes, 1947.
12. SYMPOSIUM ON THE PUBLIC LANDS, 1947.
16. RECREATION, by Dorothy I. Cline and K. Peterson Rose, 1948.
21. CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS IN NEW MEXICO—1949.
23. CORPORATION COMMISSION, by Frederick C. Irion, 1950.

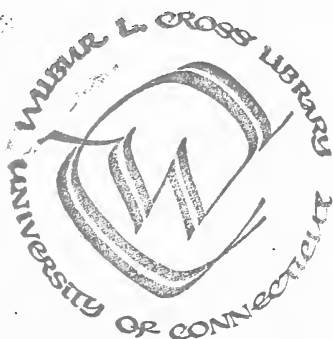
# Octaviano Larrazolo

## A Political Portrait

Alfred C. Córdova

and

Charles B. Judah



DIVISION OF RESEARCH  
DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT  
UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO  
ALBUQUERQUE, NOVEMBER 15, 1952

Copyright, 1952, Division of Research  
Department of Government  
University of New Mexico

F

801

L3

C6

## Part I

# OCTAVIANO LARRAZOLO AND HIS TIMES

Octaviano Larrazolo was born on December 7, 1859, at Allende in the southern part of the state of Chihuahua, Mexico.

In 1859 Mexico was in the midst of perhaps the bitterest of her many civil wars. Benito Juárez had been driven from his capital and Miguel Miramón, a leader of the reactionaries ruled in the federal city of Mexico, while his able and brutal general Leonardo Márquez won victory after victory on the battlefield.

Abroad the United States was on the verge of her own Civil War; England, France and Spain stood ready to intervene in Mexico to protect the financial interests of their subjects. It was not until two years later when the course of the war had changed and Juárez had returned to Mexico City that the defeated and exiled reactionaries carried the false tales to France that eventually brought about the short lived and tragic Mexican Empire under Maximilian.

Civil War and international intrigue may seem far removed from the infant born at Allende in Chihuahua, particularly as New rather than old Mexico was to be the scene of Octaviano's adult life. However, had it not been for the three years of civil war which paved the way for the advent of Maximilian, it is probable that Larrazolo would never have left Mexico.

Larrazolo's father, also named Octaviano, was a prosperous landholder. Consequently it may be assumed that his son grew up on a ranch. But the normal life of a boy of this class and situation cannot be presumed. Maximilian came to Mexico and in time the wars came to Chihuahua, and although it is not known if the elder Octaviano participated, or if so to what degree, it is probable that he sympathized with Juárez, once more an exile from his capital. In any event the Larrazolo fortune was lost during the campaign around Allende and the ranch was seized and used as headquarters for French troops.<sup>1</sup>

Meantime, despite the wars, the Bishop of Arizona, the Reverend J. B. Salpointe, an old friend of the Larrazolo family visited Allende

1. Interview, Alfred C. Córdova with Paul Larrazolo, (son of Governor Larrazolo), Belen, New Mexico, December 13, 1949. Cited from Córdova, A. C., *Octaviano Larrazolo*, p. 2, an unpublished MS. in the library of the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

from time to time. There the young Octaviano assisted him in the celebration of mass and other rites. In 1870 the Bishop, interested in the possibility of the boy entering the priesthood, and sympathizing with his family's financial difficulties, offered to take him to Arizona.<sup>2</sup>

Although by 1870 Maximillian and Miramón had died before a firing squad and the butcher General Márquez was a pawn broker in Havana, Cuba, and Juárez once again governed Mexico, the reduced circumstances of the elder Larrazolo made the offer welcome. Thus in 1870 Octaviano Larrazolo left family and home and came to the United States. He was eleven years old.

*The Democrat.* The young Larrazolo lived in Tucson for five years. During this period he received schooling from Bishop Salpointe. In addition to the basic skills, Octaviano studied Spanish, English and Latin.<sup>3</sup>

In 1875 Bishop Salpointe moved to Santa Fe. He took Larrazolo with him. There the latter attended St. Michaels for two years. This completed his formal education.

Bishop Salpointe's hopes that Octaviano might enter the priesthood were not realized. His schooling finished, the young man (he was eighteen years old) returned to Tucson as a school teacher. After one year in Arizona he accepted a position as principal of schools at San Elizario in El Paso County, Texas. He was to remain in Texas for seventeen years. During these years the school teacher was transformed into lawyer-politician.

After seven years of teaching, during which time he was active in Democratic politics, Larrazolo was appointed Chief Clerk of the United States District and Circuit Courts for the Western District of Texas. The following year he was elected clerk of the District Court at El Paso. He was reelected in 1888. That same year, having read law in the office of Judge Falvey of El Paso,<sup>4</sup> he was admitted to the Texas bar. Following his service as District Clerk, Larrazolo was elected and reelected states attorney. At the expiration of his second term he abandoned Texas for New Mexico.

Larrazolo did not return to Santa Fe, but went instead to Las Vegas. This decision seems to have resulted from the urging of Felix Martínez, a close friend who was prominent in San Miguel County and state Democratic circles. In Las Vegas Larrazolo settled down to the practice of law and politics.

The New Mexico to which Larrazolo returned was in many respects still a frontier. But an era was drawing to a close. Billy the

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*



Kid was dead and the large scale cattle wars that nurtured him were things of the past. The Indians rode on their raids no more. "The depredations committed by the Indians have greatly decreased, and there are few complaints of raiding Indians during the present year."<sup>5</sup> And while the bad old ways and days receded, civilization with its blessings advanced. The territory's economy was sufficiently enmeshed with that of the rest of the United States to suffer in the panic of Benjamin Harrison's second administration; the railroad crossed the state and competed with the stage lines; the tide of Anglo immigration was swelling; McKinley and the full dinner pail were just beyond the horizon. Territorial Governor Thornton in his annual report to the Secretary of the Interior wrote:

"The financial depression and business stagnation that affected this territory in common with all parts of the Union so disastrously last year has in a great measure passed away and upon every hand may be seen the evidence of renewed business activity and coming prosperity . . . New Mexico has never been so wonderfully blessed with copious rains and all that tends to the production of a bounteous harvest . . . Everywhere across the broad plains and over mountains and valleys we find a most luxurious growth of native grasses . . . Those best informed pronounce the present crop of fruits, grapes, grasses and grains to be the largest in the history of New Mexico.

"This together with an advance of 25 percent in the value of wool has given new life and impetus to the ranchmen and agriculturists. . . .

"The healthful immigration which had set in the Pecos Valley, in the counties of Eddy and Chavez referred to in my last annual report to the Secretary of the Interior has continued and somewhat increased during the last year. Especially is this the case in the County of Chavez where the immigration has been very large."<sup>6</sup>

Politically, too, the territory's frontier pattern was fading, though the change was far from revolutionary. Thomas B. Catron of Santa Fe, long time Republican boss, was being challenged by younger men. The machine which was to make Larrazolo governor and oppose a second term was in the making. But the governorship was many years in the future. In 1895 Larrazolo was a staunch Democrat and in 1896 he supported Harvey Fergusson, that party's choice for delegate to Congress. Four years later he, himself, was the Democratic candidate.

Larrazolo was defeated in 1900 and again as Democratic candidate for the same office in 1906 and 1908. Perhaps the result was not

5. Report of the Governor (W. T. Thornton) of New Mexico to the Secretary of Interior, 1894, p. 33.

6. Report of the Governor of New Mexico to the Secretary of the Interior, 1895, pp. 3-4.

of lasting importance in the history of New Mexico. The consuming problem of the territory was statehood and Bernard Rodey and W. H. Andrews, the successful Republicans, worked effectively to that end. Larrazolo could probably have done no better. But if the state was not shaken, the man was. He had not stinted in the support he gave to the Democratic party. Slowly, reluctantly he was driven to the conclusion that his loyalty was not returned. He believed that his defeat in 1906 was not caused by Republicans but by Democrats of the east-side counties who would not vote for a "native."<sup>7</sup>

The election of 1906 brought the greatest disappointment and frustration. The election was extremely close and the Democrats contested it. Such contests were settled by the House Committee on Territories. The committee failed to act until the eve of the election of 1908. Larrazolo believed that the intolerable delay on the part of the committee was caused in part by the indifference of its Democratic members. True they were in a minority and may have been convinced that the cause was hopeless. But Larrazolo felt that they might have at least tried. When the case was finally disposed of some of the Committee's Democratic members were not even present. The defeat of 1908 apparently confirmed the growing conviction that he could not count on full support from the Democrats of the east-side. Larrazolo supported the party for a little while longer, but never again ran on the Democratic ticket.

*The State Constitution.* On June 20, 1910, the act enabling New Mexico to hold a state constitutional convention was signed in Washington. In New Mexico both the Republican and Democratic parties threw themselves into the fight for delegates.

The Democrats, led by Harvey Fergusson, advocated a constitution in which the "progressive" principles of the period should be embodied. These principles were actually progressive Republican quite as much as Democratic and, as a matter of fact, on the national scene were finding their most vigorous advocates among Republicans such as Senators LaFollette and Norris. But even in 1912, the year of Theodore Roosevelt's candidacy for president on the Progressive ticket and of the high tide of the party's success, the Bull Moose found little favor among New Mexico Republicans<sup>8</sup> who believed

7. Interview, Alfred C. Córdova with Octaviano C. Larrazolo (son of Governor Larrazolo) Albuquerque, New Mexico, February 25, 1950, cited from Córdova, A. C., *Octaviano Larrazolo*.

8. Mario C. de Baca, Progressive candidate for United States Representative received 12.1% of the vote, Nathan Joffa, Republican 36.9%, Harvey Fergusson, Democrat, 45.6%. In the Republican strongholds the Progressives fared even worse. Examples: San Miguel (Larrazolo's county) Republicans 56.2%, Democrats, 39.9%, Progressives 3.4%, Valencia, Republicans 75.5%, Democrats 18%, Progressives 4.4%, Rio Arriba, Republicans 57.1%, Democrats 38.7%, Progressives 4.4%.

that "the last frontier" could be developed most quickly and to the greatest advantage to all the people if capital were encouraged to enter the state. Such encouragement included protection of investment and guarantees against undue political interference with free enterprise.<sup>9</sup> This indeed had been the pattern of the development of the American West and following its design the country had grown rich and great and its people prosperous, self-reliant individualists who wore no man's nor any government's collar. Such at least was the thesis to which most Americans, Republicans and Democrats, alike, subscribed. The year was 1910.

Such was the general situation during New Mexico's campaign for delegates to the state's constitutional convention. The question that was probably discussed most was the initiative and referendum, generally supported by the Democrats. Other issues receiving attention were a primary election law, control of utilities, method of election of the judiciary, an election code, prohibition and woman's suffrage. (Neither party supported the last two although they received some support from groups within each). So issues and principles were debated, and meantime the party organizations were at work. The Republicans had the best organization; they won, electing seventy-one delegates to the Democrats' twenty-nine.

But political allegiance is only one motive for men's action even when they are performing a political function. Social, professional, economic or ethnological background may, for example, prove stronger than party loyalty. In such terms the following half facetious analysis is enlightening:

"There will be thirty-two lawyers in the constitutional convention and only three editors to keep tab on them. There will be twenty stockmen but only one college president; there will be twenty merchants and business men, seven farmers, four saloon men, four bankers, three physicians, three territorial officials, including a judge of the supreme court, and the assistant superintendent of public instruction. One railroad conductor, one lumber operator, one mine operator will be among the hundred delegates. . . ."<sup>10</sup>

9. Article IX, Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 of the State Constitution which provided not only for the payment of Territorial debts but also that the new state must assume responsibility for county indebtedness valid as of June 20th, 1910 were certainly comforting to the holders of county bonds. But it must also have reassured other investors who might be casting a speculative eye on New Mexico. Constitutional guarantee of his money must be a creditor's dream. New Mexico's subsequent experience with the regulation of public utilities indicates the tenderness with which they were regarded by the authors of the state's Constitution.

10. News item in the Santa Fe *New Mexican*, reprinted in the Roosevelt County *Herald*, Portales, New Mexico, September 15, 1910. Cited from Ihde, Ira C., *Washington Ellsworth Lindsey, Third Governor of New Mexico*, an unpublished MS. in the library of the University of New Mexico, p. 118.

A more serious contemporary analyzed and questioned as follows:

"The question arises, therefore, will this body frame a constitution which guards the welfare of the people—a people's constitution—or will the efforts of the convention result in a constitution which looks mainly to the interests of the great corporations? It is certain, we may assume, that the Democratic and the fusion delegates—as far as their influence may count—will stand for a people's constitution. And by this we do not mean that an effort will be made by the delegates which represent these ideas to undertake to eliminate all and everything from the constitution which seeks to encourage capital to come to this state, but only that it shall come under the proper safeguards. On the other hand, it cannot be assumed that all of the 58 straight Republican delegates will stand for a corporation constitution. Many of them are good clean men, who have lived and thought near to the heart of the people and would be, (and perhaps will be) known as "insurgents," and without some partisan influence, some iniquitous caucus program, or some improper influence upon a majority of their numbers by the agents of the corporations themselves, we rather believe that a majority of them—or even a minority of them can cooperate with the Fusion and Democratic elements in such a way as to secure to the people of New Mexico the best basic law ever written into the fabric of American statehood."<sup>11</sup>

The fond hope that the regular Republican leadership could be displaced by a coalition was doomed. "There was no time for the 'insurgents' or Progressive Republicans, to organize, while the stand-patters had the thing all 'cut and dried,' as usual," wrote one delegate, himself a Progressive Republican.<sup>12</sup>

The result was a constitution that represented the views of the Republican party leadership, the corporations and, as subsequent events were to show, most of the voters of New Mexico, including a large number of Democrats. It did not meet the approval of Harvey Fergusson and a majority of the Democratic leaders.

Among their objections the failure to provide for the initiative, the lack of effective machinery for the control of corporations, and the difficulty of amendment were most stressed. Regarding the latter, Fergusson went so far as to testify before the House Committee on the Territories:

"If the constitution could be made more easy of amendment we would be willing to take our chances because the prevailing sentiment of both of the parties in New Mexico is for statehood."<sup>13</sup>

11. Editorial in *Roosevelt County Herald*, Portales, New Mexico, September 8, 1910. Cited from Ihde, Ira C., *Washington Ellsworth Lindsey*, an unpublished thesis in the University of New Mexico Library, pp. 117-118.

12. Letter of Washington E. Lindsey, published in the *Roosevelt County Herald*, Portales, New Mexico, October 6, 1910. Cited from Ihde, Ira C., *Washington Ellsworth Lindsey*, p. 121.

13. Hearings before the Committee on the Territories of the House of Representa-

But the Democrats were badly divided. It is quite possible that most of them—as well as numerous “progressive Republicans”—would have preferred a constitution embodying the progressive principles of the day. But to many of these the issue was not the nature of the constitution but statehood. Thus though nineteen Democratic delegates to the convention voted against adoption, eight voted for it, and after it had carried all but seven of the dissidents signed. The rank and file of the voters were even more determined to have statehood at any cost. Once this, the goal of more than fifty years of struggle, had been attained lesser problems, including possible faults in the state constitution, could be attended to. When submitted to the voters the constitution was approved. It received slightly over 70 per cent of the vote.

San Miguel County sent a solid Republican delegation to the constitutional convention—thus Larrazolo was not a member. Nonetheless the constitution and the fight over ratification marked a crisis and a turning point in his career. In general he agreed with the Democratic advocacy of a liberal constitution—particularly regarding the initiative, and spoke publicly to this effect. But to him another issue was even more vital—that of safeguarding the political and civil rights of the Spanish-American population. In this respect the proposed constitution left nothing to be desired. Consequently, when the Democratic leadership opposed adoption, it opposed, although admittedly incidentally, what Larrazolo believed represented a guarantee of justice to the Spanish-American people. Under these circumstances, he did not hesitate but threw himself with all his customary fire and eloquence into the fight. A speech delivered September 21, 1910, is revealing.

“. . . I want to give you at least a few reasons why I am in favor of the adoption of the constitution. You know that I am a Democrat, and hope that I may be permitted to remain in my party.

“I addressed the voters of this and other counties some time ago, explaining what in my humble opinion, should be written in this constitution, dwelling on such progressive measures as the initiative and the referendum. I told you then and I believe now, they are good measures. I do not believe they are Republican nor do I believe they are Democratic measures of self-government. . . .

“But some of the people elected to the constitutional convention it appears were not in sympathy with these measures. So now we are simply confronted with the question, shall we have statehood by adopting this constitution or shall we remain in slavery. . . .

---

tives on the House Joint Resolution No. 14 approving the constitutions formed by the Constitutional Convention of the Territories of New Mexico and Arizona, April 22, 1911. No. 2: p. 17. Cited from Córdova, Alfred, *Octaviano Larrazolo*, p. 15.

"Every native citizen must unite in supporting this constitution. Why? Because it secures to you people of New Mexico your rights—every one of them; the rights also of your children and in such a manner that they can never be taken away. If you want to acquire your freedom and transmit this sacred heritage in the land hallowed by the blood of your forefathers who fought to protect it, seize your opportunity and do not let it slip through your hands to your lasting regret and that of your descendants.

"This is your opportunity and God only knows when, if ever, it will come again. . . . Do not wait until you are put in the position of Arizona which in two years will be able to disenfranchise every Spanish speaking citizen."<sup>14</sup>

The campaign supporting the proposed constitution was the last one in which Larrazolo participated as even a nominal Democrat. A little more than a year later he formally renounced his party allegiance. Although somewhat long, his letter to W. C. McDonald, Chairman of the Democratic Central Committee, declaring his purpose, cannot be abridged. It discloses too much of the man and the politician—his convictions, his doubts, his frustrated hopes and final resolution:

"Las Vegas, N. M., Aug. 29, 1911. Hon. W. C. McDonald, Chairman, Democratic Territorial Central Committee, Carrizozo, N. M.

"My Dear Mr. McDonald:

"It becomes my painful duty to tender to you my resignation as a member at large of the Democratic Territorial Central Committee of New Mexico, and in doing so, a due regard to the place that I have occupied in the ranks of the Democratic Party in this territory, demands that I make known to the membership of the party and to the public at large, the reasons that have impelled me to take this step, and which have been directly instrumental in deciding my political course for the future. It must have been apparent to you and to the electorate of New Mexico in general, for indeed, I have made no secret of my set purpose and determination in that regard, that in the very active part that I have taken in the political struggles in this territory during the last ten or twelve years, while earnestly striving to build up and strengthen the Democratic party, I have bent all my energies and best efforts to bring together, in fraternal fellowship the various elements that make up our collective citizenship, so that, by mutually recognizing and by according the one to the other the equal rights to which we are all entitled under the law, we might all join in a combined and united effort to build up and develop the natural resources of our beloved territory, so soon now to become a sovereign state, and feeling that we are all brothers, enjoying an equal measure of the rights and privileges in a land that is the common heritage of us and of our children.

"Will the Democratic party fulfill those aspirations? Does its past his-

14. Santa Fe *New Mexican*, December 21, 1910.

tory offer any assurance or guarantee that it will respect the rights of the various elements of our citizenship, should it obtain the control of our state government, and thus secure harmony and good will among us all, so essential to our happiness and prosperity? We can only foretell the future by judging from the past.

"Let us briefly review that past. At the general elections of 1904 out of a total vote of 43,011 in the territory, the Republican majority over the Democratic delegate to Congress was 8,599. In view of that crushing defeat, which was but a repetition on a larger scale however of our repeated failures in the past, when the territorial Democratic convention for delegate to Congress met, it was found that no one was willing to accept the leadership of a hopeless cause. Finally, after two days spent in fruitless efforts to find a candidate, the nomination was tendered to me; I accepted it, and the result is known to all, for I presume that no candid man, acquainted with the facts, will deny that I was legally elected. Upon being illegally counted out, a contest was instituted before the Congress of the United States for the seat of delegate from this territory. Before that contest was heard, however, the election of 1908 was held, and again was the Democratic nomination for Congress conferred on me. The result of the previous election had made it almost certain that the nomination was practically equivalent to an election if the Democrats, in the Democratic counties of New Mexico, would but do their duty at the polls, and in the many political meetings in those counties, where I addressed the voters.

"I dwelt with insistence on that one condition essential to success. viz: that the voters should go to the polls and cast their ballots particularly so as it was evident that the opposition would bend every energy to retain the supremacy that was fast slipping from their hands. In this I was not mistaken; in all the strong Republican counties of the territory, the local tickets were almost completely lost sight of in the determined and combined efforts to defeat me. The result was that I lost the counties of Union, Mora and San Miguel, that had gone for me at the previous election, but we won the counties of Colfax and Torrance, and retained Guadalupe and Rio Arriba, all of them strong Republican counties; besides, the Republican majorities in nearly all of the other Republican counties were greatly reduced; as a whole, we maintained the ground that we had gained in 1906 in the Republican strongholds of the territory and the election would have been won if the Eastern Democratic counties had but given the head of the ticket the same support that they gave to the balance of the ticket. But how was it there? Eddy county gave a majority of 684 for the head of the ticket, while the average majority for all other candidates was 966. The average majority for the local ticket in Roosevelt county was 1083, while the head of the ticket carried the county by only 765. Chavez county only gave a majority of 562, as against one of 670 in the election of 1906. In consequence of this, the election was lost by a narrow margin of 388 votes and thus one more defeat was added to the many that we had sustained uninterruptedly since 1898. After this election, in January, 1909, the contest pending upon the election 1906 was heard by the proper committee of Congress.

"It is needless to say that the defeat which I had just suffered in the territory, greatly weakened whatever chance I might have had of winning my fight in that contest. In this connection I wish to remark that the house committee on elections that heard my contest consisted of nine members, six Republican members and three Democrats; during the course of the hearing which lasted two days, I met all the Republican members of the committee, but only met one of the Democratic members, the Honorable William E. Tou Velle, of Ohio, the other two gentlemen never attended any of the sittings, and I never met them. The Republican majority of the committee, as was expected, made their report upholding the election of the Republican candidate, but the Democratic minority, notwithstanding the uncontradicted proof of my election, did not even file a protest against the majority report.

"Following the unlooked for result of the election of 1908, the unjustifiable conduct of the Democratic minority of the Congressional committee on elections that heard my case, many of our Democrats went into the Republican ranks, others left the territory, while several prominent and active party workers declared that they would retire from active participation in politics. But let me pursue this review of events a little further. Pursuant to the act of Congress of June 20th, 1910, providing for the admission of the territories of New Mexico and Arizona to statehood, the constitutional convention met at Santa Fe on the 3rd day of October, A. D., 1910, and what did we see there? Nine counties in New Mexico are undisputedly Democratic and had an aggregate representation of 26 members in that convention, but among them there was not one of the native element of our electorate, in spite of the fact that many thousands of them reside in those counties. What is the logical deduction to be drawn from these circumstances? And does such conduct manifest any disposition to fraternize and do equal justice to all? The facts speak for themselves and furnish the undisguised answer to the question. On the other hand the representation from the Republican counties in the constitutional convention was made up of all elements of our mixed population. The foregoing circumstances added to many others which would be exceedingly unpleasant and vexatious to enumerate, have forced me to the humiliating conviction that in the Democratic party of New Mexico, there exists an element of intolerance that should not be countenanced or encouraged, because it tends directly to the destruction of that feeling of harmony and good-fellowship among us all so essential to our happiness and material prosperity. That that element is not now in the majority in the party, I sincerely believe, but I am afraid that if strong enough, even now to make me apprehensive for the future welfare of a very large number of people of New Mexico, and it has marked the end of my period of usefulness to our citizenship as a member of that party.

"This has been my firm conviction for some time past, but a man does not lightly abandon the ideals of a lifetime, nor does he at my day of life easily break loose from associations in which he has grown old, without snapping many heart-strings that bind him closely to set convictions which



he has honestly and sincerely nourished and sustained, the separation is bitter as the last farewell of a father to his child, it is like the last look at a closing grave. Hence, it is that although I told my friend, the Hon. H. B. Fergusson, at Santa Fe, when the territorial Democratic Convention that met in that city on the 17th day of December, A. D., 1910, had declared against the adoption of the constitution, that my connection with the Democratic party has come to an end, upon more calm and sober reflection I withheld final action, in the hope that I might see my way clear to still remain in the party. The intervening period, however, has been one of excruciating mental suffering, for the more I reasoned with myself, the stronger grew the conviction that the moment of the final separation would inevitably come; and it has come.

"Duty calls on me to devote the last weak efforts of my remaining days in the support of that party which has given proofs of its willingness and disposition to respect the rights of all alike. Nor am I unmindful of the personal disadvantages that this resolve will place me under, for I fully realize that the Democratic party today in New Mexico, is not the weak almost impotent party that I had the honor to lead in 1906; today, that party is strong, robust and full of virile life, well able and amply equipped to sustain the struggle for party supremacy. I also feel that the services I have rendered the party in the past, would reasonably secure to me honorable recognition at its hands in the future. On the other hand, I have no right to demand, from my new political companions; but in the discharge of duty, as God has made me to understand it, I leave the honored place to which I am entitled there to join the plain ranks of the Republican party.

"In conclusion, allow me to say, my dear Mr. McDonald, that in severing our political relations I carry with me no malice towards anyone, I shall ever cherish with fond pride my friendship for you and for those who have honored me with their friendship.

"With the assurance of my high personal regard and esteem for you, I am,

"Very respectfully and sincerely yours,  
"O. A. Larrazolo"<sup>15</sup>

*The Republican.* Larrazolo's decision to change parties must have been difficult indeed. For thirty years he had been a Democrat, for most of that period he was active in party affairs, having held public office in Texas and been three times the Democratic candidate for territorial representative from New Mexico to Congress. These years of service had assured him a position of leadership in the Democratic party. To abandon that party was thus not only a break with the past but also a grave, if calculated, risk of his political future. He would not, of course, have to start at the bottom of the ladder, his support was of too great value to the Republicans for that, but he would have to descend several rungs. And he was fifty-

<sup>15.</sup> Santa Fe *New Mexican*, August 31, 1911.

one years old. There was not too much time left for climbing. Nonetheless he took the step because he was convinced, as he stated in the letter to McDonald, that there were certain elements in the Democratic party that did not believe the Spanish-speaking people were entitled to enjoy "an equal measure of the rights and privileges in a land that is the common heritage of us and our children." That there must be an equal measure of rights and privileges was the cornerstone of Octaviano Larrazolo's creed and career. He felt that unless this were recognized, the mass of Spanish-American people would continue to be the victims of under-privilege and lack of education as they had been for so long and under so many flags. He was particularly concerned with education, feeling that this was the key to welfare,<sup>16</sup> and he understood the processes of democracy well enough to realize that equal opportunity would be more readily attained by a group if it exercised equal political power. Conversely, if prejudice held them unfit for full participation in politics and political office, it would hold them equally unfit for equal participation in other more substantive goods.

In short, Larrazolo understood the democratic process; he saw clearly that political participation and political office were not only desirable in themselves—and he himself found them so—but that they constituted the measure of a man's or group's ability to attain other good things. Consequently he insisted not only upon the Spanish-Americans' right to vote but that they be given representation upon the party tickets. As a result, he has been accused of introducing the race issue into New Mexico politics. That, of course, he did not do. An analysis of the election returns of either northern or eastern counties proves that there was racial voting among both ethnic groups before Larrazolo's time. Thomas Catron wrote:

"The party (Republican) in New Mexico, is composed, two-thirds of native people of Mexican descent and one-third of states-people of Anglo-Saxon descent. The Democratic party is composed, three-fourths of people of Anglo-Saxon descent and one-fourth of Mexican descent. . . . Nearly all those of Mexican descent favored sound money and tariff for protection. A majority of them have always been republicans and true to the Union, having furnished nearly seven thousand volunteers, and three thousand militia for the support of the Union during the late war and not one to the Confederate States. They have many able, well educated bright men among them. . . . For fifty years they have been kept in the background. Now, nearly all of them are native-born Americans, educated in our country according to our customs and manners, and with nothing foreign in them.

16. Interview with Paul Larrazolo, October 10, 1951.

They feel that they should be recognized equally with other Americans, and not ignored as they have been in the past.”<sup>17</sup>

This was written in 1897, only two years after Larrazolo's return to New Mexico. Already the “race issue” was recognized. However, if Larrazolo did not raise the issue he did emphasize it. He felt that since it existed it should be aired, and air it he did with all the eloquence that caused him to be known throughout the state as the “silver tongued,” the most famed orator in the history of New Mexico, territory or state. If this was good or bad is, perhaps, debatable—that it was motivated by a sincere interest in the people of New Mexico cannot be doubted. This is not to say that no personal element was involved. Octaviano Larrazolo was politically ambitious—men who become governor of a state and United States Senator are apt to be—and he makes it amply clear that he felt he had been badly treated by certain elements of the Democratic party, but personal ambition or pique cannot alone explain his career. Conviction was also a factor.

In any event having reluctantly arrived at the conclusion that the interest of the Spanish-American people and his own would be best served by the Republican party, he lost little time in idle regrets. On September 26, 1911, he delivered a slashing attack on the Democratic party and urged support for Republican candidates.

“I know that it has been said I have come to the Republican party to wage a war on the race issue, but the man who says that knows he willfully and maliciously utters an untruth.

“No, I have come to you Republicans, to administer equal rights to all. . . .

“I am denouncing a political organization (the Democrats) that is too narrow to be fair.

“Race war indeed? What a subterfuge! All I ask is fairness . . .

“But I say to you that with the same vigor that I fought to build up the Democratic party in New Mexico, so help me God I will fight to everlastingly destroy that party.”<sup>18</sup>

It was upon this theme that Larrazolo played, with variations, during the rest of his life. He was unquestionably convinced that his decision was right and that the charges he directed against the Democratic party were justified. Yet there must have been moments of

17. Thomas B. Catron to President William McKinley, April 30, 1897. Cited from Sluga, Mary, *The Political Life of Thomas Benton Catron* (unpublished MS., University of New Mexico Library) p. 28.

18. Speech delivered in Santa Fe as reported in *Santa Fe New Mexican*, September 26, 1911.

reflection. In 1916, for example, when E. C. de Baca<sup>19</sup> was nominated and elected governor by the Democrats while he, Larrazolo, though a strong candidate, was ultimately rejected by the Republicans as their nominee for justice of the Supreme Court. However, even under such circumstances he could take courage from the fact that in the larger sense he was winning his fight for recognition of the Spanish-speaking people. Thus Twitchell, an unfriendly witness, wrote:

"For approximately two years Octaviano Larrazolo of San Miguel County, had been actively engaged in some of the middle and northern counties of the state in making personal appeals to the native-son element of both parties advocating the nomination of representatives of the native people for a larger number of the state offices than had heretofore been given them and was himself a candidate for the position of justice of the supreme court. . . .

"The result of the efforts on his part were noticeable in the attitude of all native-son delegates in the state convention of both political parties, but was most effective with the Democrats and brought about the nomination of Esquiél Cabeza de Baca for the governor. . . ."

And if he read the *Santa Fe New Mexican* of September 29, 1918, he must have smiled:

"On the night before that convention [Democratic] met in Santa Fe a movement for his [de Baca's] selection was started, strangely enough by the delegates from the counties of the Pecos Valley."<sup>20</sup>

The east-side that had rejected him three times was thus forced to pay tribute to his influence and to heed his demands. However, although Democratic action may have gratified or amused him in some degree, it was probably but cold comfort. His stated intention was to devote his efforts not to the reformation of the Democratic party in New Mexico, but to its destruction. Moreover, although he was devoted to his cause, he was also personally ambitious and must have wondered if he might not have been the Democratic candidate had he stayed in the party. He had not stayed, he was approaching sixty and had not yet held public office in New Mexico. But destiny, in the form of the shifting pattern of American party politics, was

19. Ezequiel C. de Baca, second governor of the State of New Mexico, was born in Las Vegas in 1864. Educated in the schools there, he attended the Jesuit College. He worked as a salesman, office clerk and railway agent in Las Vegas. In 1891 he became associated with *La Voz del Pueblo*, a Spanish weekly published in Las Vegas. In 1894-95 he served as District Court of San Miguel County. The first Democratic State Convention nominated him for Lieutenant Governor. He was elected and served. In 1916 he was a delegate to the Democratic national convention. Elected governor of New Mexico, he took oath of office but died a few weeks later, February 17, 1918.

20. *Santa Fe New Mexican*, September 29, 1918.

soon to smile on Octaviano Larrazolo. Governor C. de Baca was inaugurated in Saint Vincents Sanatorium in Santa Fe and died of pernicious anemia six weeks later. The lieutenant governor, Washington Lindsey, took office. Meantime in far away Washington, the Republican party's majority in the Senate was precariously small. Thus, although no one could foresee it, the stage was set for a new act in which Octaviano Larrazolo was to play a leading role.

Washington Lindsey, although an able and conscientious governor, was a political accident. In 1916 the Republicans nominated Holm O. Bursum as their candidate for governor. Bursum was the acknowledged leader of the "regulars" and as such, generated little enthusiasm among party progressives. To hold them in line, Lindsey, from Portales in Roosevelt County, was chosen for lieutenant governor. It is an old political maneuver, and one which involves the obvious risk of backfire. In this case it backfired twice. First, Bursum, the party's candidate for governor, was beaten, but with the illogic that is the prerogative of the American voter, Lindsey was elected. Then C. de Baca, the Democratic governor, died. Thus, the Republican leadership and the Republican majority in the legislature were saddled with a governor with whom at best they were out of sympathy and although Lindsey was not entirely intransigent, neither was he submissive. Two instances of strained relations between the governor and party leaders are of particular significance in the career of Octaviano Larrazolo.

"Governor de Baca had appointed Dennis Chavez to the position [game warden] and the office had traditionally gone to Spanish-Americans. The regular Republicans hoped to follow the tradition in order to appease that faction within their party. Lindsey, however, did not choose to pay any attention to such traditional distinctions in making his appointments. He withdrew Baca's nomination and replaced it with the appointment of Theodore Roualt of Las Cruces."<sup>21</sup>

To Larrazolo and those who shared his view, such disregard of "traditional distinctions" was betrayal. To other Republican leaders it was at best very bad politics. The most impressive Republican majorities came from such predominantly Spanish-American counties as Valencia and San Miguel. To the objective observer it raises the question if ethnic attitudes are not geographic rather than politically partisan. In any event, disregard of traditional patronage policies lessened the future political availability of Washington Lindsey.

A further strain on the relations between the governor and his party directly concerned Larrazolo. In 1917 New Mexico was in-

21. Ihde, Ira C., *Washington Ellsworth Lindsey*, pp. 260-261.

volved in a boundary dispute with Texas. A bill appropriating \$50,000 for prosecution of the suit in the courts was introduced into the legislature. This bill further stipulated that O. A. Larrazolo be employed by the state as chief counsel. Charges were immediately made that the Republican "old guard" was paying off its political debts. Governor Lindsey may or may not have agreed with these charges, but he did believe that it was improper for the statute to designate who should be employed. He informed legislative leaders he would not sign the bill unless the names of Larrazolo and the other attorneys were deleted. The bill was passed and Larrazolo was employed. In the 1918 campaign the Democrats were to attempt to revive the matter as a campaign issue.

There were other conflicts between the Republican legislature and the Republican governor.<sup>22</sup> A democratic member of the state Senate summed it up:

"The Old Guard respected Lindsey but they did not trust him for leadership. Their support came from interests that were not for his progressive type of leadership. Also they sought the favor of the Spanish speaking people. They too were not in favor of his program, nor were they willing to support an east-side man who might have the Texas idea of race relationships."<sup>23</sup>

Thus Lindsey who had never been really acceptable to the Republican leaders (this antipathy was reciprocated) failed to win their support. From their standpoint he was unavailable for another term. They liked neither his principles nor his leadership. Furthermore, they felt he had alienated a large bloc of voters and could not be re-elected. A poor vote getter could not be tolerated from either the state or national viewpoint.

In 1918 party alignment in the United States Senate could not have been more delicately balanced. Of the sixty senators not up for re-election, thirty were Democrats, thirty Republicans. Thirty-six seats were to be filled at the November election. But the Republicans were at a slight disadvantage because in case of a tie, Vice President Marshall, a Democrat, would cast the deciding vote and the Democrats would organize the Senate. Under such circumstances every doubtful state was regarded with a mixture of hope and anxiety. New Mexico was among the doubtful. In 1917 seven Republicans and five Democrats had been elected, the Democrats winning the

<sup>22</sup>. See *ibid.*, pp. 261-266, for a detailed account of Lindsey's relations with the legislature.

<sup>23</sup>. Personal interview of Ira C. Ihde with Mr. R. G. Bryant, Portales, New Mexico, March 27, 1948. Cited from Ihde, Ira C., *Washington Ellsworth Lindsey*, p. 265.

congressional seat by only five hundred and fifty votes. If the incumbent Republican Senator, Albert B. Fall, was to be re-elected it would obviously entail a hard fight. Fall had decided not to run again but he was "two thousand votes" stronger than any other Republican, and his seniority in Congress, enhanced the Republican hold on vital committees,<sup>24</sup> so he was persuaded by members of the Republican National Committee to reconsider. In July he returned to New Mexico and supported by the Republican National Committee urged that with control of the United States Senate in the balance his re-election should be a prime consideration in the choice of the party's candidate for governor. To Senator Fall this meant a gubernatorial candidate who would complement his own proved prowess as a vote getter. His plea was received sympathetically by the Republican leaders, who recognized that the situation within the state itself required a popular candidate at the head of the ticket. Twice they had nominated H. O. Bursum their leader and personal choice. Both times he had been defeated—in part, though only in part, because of his identification with the organization. They could ill afford another mistake. On the other hand neither inclination nor judgment prompted the nomination of Lindsey. He was unacceptable to them and would not lend strength to Fall. So there were meetings among politicians and speculation on the part of the public. Octaviano Larrazolo's name was frequently mentioned in both conference and speculation. His qualifications were such that he appeared to have been tailored to fit specifications. Popular among the Spanish speaking people, he would give Senator Fall strength where he most needed it; although not one of the inner circle of Republican leaders and consequently not vulnerable as Bursum had been to charges of "bossism," he was acceptable to them. Finally, he was the "silver tongued" orator, and a veteran campaigner of proved ability. Thus from the beginning Larrazolo was a strong possibility as the Republican party's candidate for governor. However, his nomination was by no means a certainty. Governor Lindsey, himself, refused to fall in with the plans of the party leaders and made a strong bid for renomination, formally announcing his candidacy, August 10. In late August the Republican state central committee met in Santa Fe. Lindsey was invited to speak and again pressed for renomination. At about this time Senator Fall once more took a hand. The Senator's touch was deft but firm. He wrote the "regular" Republican leaders that he wanted a Spanish-American candidate for governor and at the same time assured Governor Lindsey of his

---

24. Santa Fe *New Mexican*, July 15, 1918.

support should a Spanish-American fail to get the nomination.<sup>25</sup>

Lindsey was given a kindly nod and the "regulars" served notice that Fall would support the governor—who they wanted under no circumstances—if his wishes were not heeded. The situation was crystalizing, but it was not quite time for a final decision. This coyness was, no doubt, in part because of a wish to "let the convention make its own choice," but it was also because of wariness in regard to making a decision until the Democrats had named a ticket. The state committee set October 2, the last possible legal date for the state convention.

The Democratic convention was held September 27. Before getting down to the business of nominating candidates it recognized the Republican party strife and contributed what it could to its furtherance. Neil B. Field, temporary chairman, in his keynote after heaping praise upon Governor Lindsey, turned his attention to Larrazolo reviving the Texas boundary dispute appropriation and condemning the "gift of \$7500 in payment of a political debt."<sup>26</sup>

Field's speech makes it evident that the Democrats anticipated Larrazolo's nomination. Had they regarded Governor Lindsey as a possible opponent they would scarcely have gone out of their way to endorse him. On the other hand, the Texas boundary affair was not worth reviving unless Larrazolo was to become the Republican candidate. In any event the Democrats further ensured the latter's nomination by choosing Félix García of Rio Arriba County as their candidate for governor. With García heading the Democratic state ticket, Fall's demand for a Spanish-American on the Republican side gained weight. It was even reported that Lindsey would withdraw from the race. However, the governor soon spiked the rumor. "I am a candidate for the nomination of governor for the Republican convention and will continue to be a candidate until the convention has registered its choice."<sup>27</sup>

The Republican convention was called to order October 2. Most members were uninstructed. Holm Bursum, in the keynote address, heaped praise upon Governor Lindsey. It was the kiss of death. Soon thereafter the convention turned to the business of choosing candidates.

Governor Lindsey was placed in nomination first. The conven-

25. Santa Fe *New Mexican*, September 13, 1918. Cited from Ihde, Ira C., *Washington Ellsworth Lindsey*, p. 271.

26. *Ibid.* Larrazolo reduced the charge to a proper perspective with the statement that it was not \$7500, and not a gift, but an earned fee of \$2500.

27. Santa Fe *New Mexican*, October 1, 1918.



tion was reminded of his really excellent record in office and assured that he could carry Democratic Roosevelt County.

Charles A. Spiess mounted the platform. He was a fellow townsman of Larrazolo; he had been chairman of the convention which wrote and adopted the state constitution for which Larrazolo had fought so hard; he belonged to the inner circle of the Republican regulars; he was a successful attorney and adroit politician. His appearance was the signal for a vociferous demonstration. This was in part for Charles Spiess. The "Black Eagle," as he had been called when introduced, was popular. But it was much more than a tribute to the speaker. The members knew why Spiess was on the platform; they cheered and stamped for Octaviano Larrazolo. It was the prelude to his nomination. Spiess's speech was astute. It was directed less to his candidate's selection, which was assured, than towards party harmony. He urged the Lindsey supporters to accept Larrazolo; he repudiated race as a divisive issue; he pleaded for victory.

"He pointed out that not merely must Roosevelt County be carried, but that Santa Fe, San Miguel, Eddy, Chavez and all the rest of the counties in the state must support the candidate nominated. He claimed that O. A. Larrazolo could do it. He claimed that Larrazolo had been accused of injecting the race issue. He defied any man to show where his candidate had ever done anything more than to insist on political equality for the Spanish people. He stated that Larrazolo wanted equal justice for both races and pointed out the fact that in the election of 1904 in a county of 4,000 Spanish and 800 Anglo voters, he had forced the nomination of an Anglo for representative in the territorial legislature as an act of simple justice. He pointed out that his candidate was a great orator and lawyer and that the demand for his nomination came from every section of the state. Mr. Spiess said that he was a friend of Governor Lindsey, but that he did not believe that the governor was the strongest candidate. For that reason, and for that reason only, he was supporting another. He believed that Larrazolo could be elected and when governor of the state, the great war work of the state would be carried on ably and intelligently and there would be no race or creed or religion in the governor's office."<sup>28</sup>

Larrazolo was nominated on the first ballot by a count of 852-118. Governor Lindsey showed strength on the east-side, getting 58 votes to Larrazolo's 34 from Chavez, Lea, Roosevelt, Quay and Curry counties. He received seven votes to his opponent's one from De Baca and half of Lincoln County's 32. The other counties led by Bernalillo (83-1), San Miguel (79-0), Socorro (68-0), Valencia (48-0) voted for Larrazolo by overwhelming or decisive majorities. The

<sup>28</sup> Córdoba, Alfred C. *Octaviano Larrazolo*, pp. 42-48. Cited from *Albuquerque Journal*, October 3, 1918.

majorities for Larrazolo in the above named counties, strongholds of the "bosses," are revealing. The "regulars" had delivered. However, Larrazolo's nomination was by no means a plot to thwart the wishes of the party rank and file. The "bosses" were successful on the whole because they represented prevailing sentiment and channeled it to their ends, not because they circumvented it. No steam roller was necessary to obtain the nomination of Larrazolo; the majority of the delegates wanted him and there is no reason to assume that they did not represent the majority of the voters. The *Albuquerque Journal* called him "the ablest Spanish American in the United States"<sup>29</sup> and although the *Santa Fe New Mexican* had opposed his nomination it supported him in the election campaign. The *Socorro Chief-tain* hailed him as one of the ablest lawyers in the state.<sup>30</sup>

Larrazolo's acceptance speech followed the general line indicated by Spiess' keynote:

"He was in poor voice and manifestly not well, but the consummate mastery of all the attributes of oratory did not forsake him and he made his usual clear, logical eloquent speech. The pith of his address, where it struck a new note from that of Senator Fall, was his apt and catchy phrase which is likely to become a slogan in this state this year that their experience in saving the Union of 1864 has proved that 'the Republican party is the only one which knows the science of making men free. It made this union free. Why is it not the party in conjunction with the allies in these later days to be entrusted with the task of making the whole world free?' Mr. Larrazolo denied that he had ever injected the race question into New Mexican affairs. He had pleaded for equal political rights for the Spanish people and believes they should have them. 'But no more than equal rights.' We are all Americans, equal in loyalty equal in patriotism. He stood on his record as a demander of fair play. He would go into the office of governor as an American, knowing no question of national origin, but determined to serve the people of the state equally and justly. He thought politics should be adjourned by both parties until the 19th day of October. If the Democrats would agree he would consent not to lift a finger in his canvass until the greater work of carrying the Fourth Liberty Loan over the top in this state was completed."<sup>31</sup>

War and influenza resulted in the shortest campaign in New Mexican history. His opponents attacked Larrazolo for the Texas boundary dispute fee, accused him of ingratitude in abandoning the Democratic party and of attempting to "Mexicanize" the state. However, they depended chiefly on the party's national war record and the plea to let them finish the job. Illness prevented Senator Fall

29. *Albuquerque Journal*, October 4, 1918.

30. Ihde, Ira C., *Washington Ellsworth Lindsey*, p. 277.

31. *Santa Fe New Mexican*, October 30, 1950.

from taking part in the campaign so the full weight fell on Larrazolo. He accepted it willingly. The burden of his argument was that Republicans as well as Democrats were supporting the war effort, and that the Republicans in Congress had supported war measures even more loyally than had the Democratic majority.<sup>32</sup>

Larrazolo received 23,752 (50.5%) of the votes to 22,433 (47.7%) for Félix García, the Democratic opponent. The Socialist candidate, A. H. Moulton, got 847 votes. Thus the Republicans elected their first governor, turning the 1.8% deficit of 1916 into a 2.8% credit, a shift of 4.6%. This was in 1918, a year in which the national trend was towards the Republican party. The Republicans also elected Senator Fall—the whole of their state ticket—and retained control of both houses of the state legislature. Analysis of the vote by counties reveals nothing of significance. The greatest Republican gains were in San Miguel (Larrazolo's home county), Guadaloupe, Otero, Sandoval and Santa Fe. The party suffered substantial losses in Lincoln, Grant and Sierra counties. It is perhaps worth a note, in passing, that it was in 1918 that Lea County embarked upon its career as the banner Democratic county of the state. Recently organized it returned in a 91.6% vote for García.

---

32. Santa Fe *New Mexican*, October 30, 1918.

## Part II

# GOVERNOR LARRAZOLO AND HIS ADMINISTRATION

On January 1, 1919, Octaviano Larrazolo was inaugurated. The new governor's political methods were those of an experienced politician, who thoroughly understood the politics of democracy and particularly those of New Mexico with its "weak governor" system. He worked in harmony with the party stalwarts in the legislature and conferred with leaders of interest groups throughout the state. Even before he took office, he met with livestockmen to discuss the effects of the drought and asked for their suggestions as to how the condition could be remedied. He interviewed the various department heads and went thoroughly into their appropriation needs. He met with educational leaders. He met with bankers, lawyers, road boosters, labor leaders and scores of private individuals. He listened to the suggestions of others and added his own.<sup>33</sup>

He also understood the dynamics of American party politics. He used patronage to advance the interest of his party and his own program. When criticized by the *El Paso Herald* for removing the warden of the state penitentiary, he replied:

"I am making appointments with a view to efficiency and good service. At the same time I am working to keep the party in power. . . .

"I would like to tell the man who points to a man who does not play politics in an office like mine, that he is a—well, a damned fool.

"I am playing politics with the view and purpose of maintaining the Republicans in power in New Mexico. But the method I have adopted to accomplish this end is to give the state an honest and efficient administration."<sup>34</sup>

On the whole, Governor Larrazolo was successful in his dealing with the fifth legislature during that body's regular session. A bill providing for a state income tax was passed, (it was to bring trouble later), a child labor law restricting the kinds of employment for which children could be hired and prohibiting their employment when school was in session was enacted, teachers' pay was raised,

<sup>33</sup> Raton Reporter, January 24, 1919. Cited from Córdova, A. C., *Octaviano Larrazolo*, p. 67.

<sup>34</sup> *El Paso Herald*, February 17, 1919.

school attendance for children between six and sixteen was made compulsory, and bilingual methods of teaching were established. This legislation concerning the schools reflects Larrazolo's conviction that education was the chief means by which the people of the state—particularly those of Spanish extraction—could better their condition. In some measure he fought for greater political recognition to make better education available. Achieving power he did what he could to realize this end.

Income tax, child labor laws, measures designed to improve public education—these represent solid achievement which entitled the regular session of the fifth legislature to be ranked high in New Mexico's history.

Constitutional amendments submitted to the people provided for absentee voting for members of the armed forces, a bond issue to be used for roads, and the creation of a three member board to supervise all state institutions. These were defeated when submitted to the voters, thus suffering the fate of most attempts to alter the state constitution. The fifth legislature also enacted a bill providing for the creation of Hidalgo County, New Mexico's twenty-fifth.

On all these and other less important measures, the governor and Republican majority in the legislature worked smoothly. However, on one issue there was disagreement. On his return to the United States Senate, Fall joined the political irreconcilables bent on destroying Woodrow Wilson. These men saw in the President's proposal that the United States join the League of Nations a fit weapon with which to stab the President. State legislatures were brought into the fight, and in March Fall spoke before New Mexico's House of Representatives urging a resolution condemning the League "as at present outlined." The House obliged, going on record in general terms against a League of Nations. Governor Larrazolo's vision was clearer. Although he had once cried: "So help me God I will fight to everlastingly destroy that (Democratic) party," he was capable of putting principle above partisanship. He vetoed the resolution stating that he believed in the principles of the League.

On the broad stage of world history, the incident is not important; but it is, perhaps, significant in the career of Larrazolo, and the history of New Mexico's politics. It was the first disagreement between the governor and the regular party leadership. They had worked harmoniously to win the election, for the most part the harmony continued through the legislative session, but here was a rift. Did it indicate a mere marriage of convenience—one based on mutual political need rather than common aims and convictions? Time would tell.

With the legislature out of the way, Governor Larrazolo was free to turn to other matters. Among the most important of these was the problem of the public domain. On August 16, 1919, representatives of the western states met at Salt Lake City to discuss the question of federally held lands. New Mexico's governor had been active in organizing the meeting and, himself, attended. He was named the first president of the League of Public Lands.

Larrazolo was much concerned with the matter of public land. He had come to the conclusion that "after the states had come together under the original pact of federation every inch of land within their respective boundaries became theirs absolutely."<sup>35</sup> But the legal aspect was of less interest to him than the practical one. He saw the West and particularly New Mexico in need of public service—schools, universities, charitable and eleemosynary institutions, highways—all were desperately needed if the people were to better their condition and attain a living standard and usefulness comparable to other parts of the country. But all these things cost money and the landholder was already heavily taxed. He had supported a state income tax, but it was not enough. The "interests"—railroads, mines, utilities—were too well entrenched to be compelled to pay more even had the governor wished it. State sales taxes were a decade in the future. What source of revenue remained—the federally held lands. Larrazolo wanted them for their revenue. He also believed they would be better administered by state officials, who were closer to the people they served. If this was more nearly Democratic than Republican party doctrine (it all happened 32 years ago and party dogma shifts in a changing world) it should be recalled that Octaviano Larrazolo had been a Democrat thirty odd years and a Republican only ten, and that he changed political allegiance to realize his aims not abandon them.

The League of Public Lands, under Larrazolo's leadership, adopted the following memorial to Congress:

"Whereas the reservations and exemptions from taxation of such large bodies of land in the respective states by the federal government severely cripples the said states in their efforts towards such development of the natural resources and internal improvements, and

"Whereas the public land states are now facing more important reconstruction and development than ever in their history and believing that individual states can more economically handle the public land within their respective boundaries to the greater beneficial advantage to the people, we therefore,

<sup>35</sup>. Transcript of the Proceedings at the *Meeting of the Governors of the League of Public Land States* held in Salt Lake City, Utah, August 18, 1919, p. 5. Cited from Córdova, A. C., *Octaviano Larrazolo*, p. 69.

“Resolve that it is the sense of this convention that Congress be respectfully urged and requested to cede all unsurveyed public lands without any minerals or other reservations to the states wherein the same are respectively situated.”<sup>36</sup>

The League of Public Lands further requested that the federal government appropriate four hundred million dollars for the building of roads within the states. This was one of the first attempts of the western states to get federal aid for state highways.

During the summer and fall of 1919 while the governor was helping to organize the League of Public Lands, the miners of New Mexico were considering the advisability of a strike. Larrazolo kept a troubled eye on this restlessness in the coal fields. He, who so readily recognized the problems of agriculture and sympathized so fully with the small farmer possessing only a strip of land or the agricultural laborer with his inadequate wage, was somewhat insensitive regarding the lot of industrial labor. This was natural. All his life, in Mexico and the United States, he had been close to the land and the people who drew a living from it. The difficulties faced by coal miners and the problems of industrial relations were largely outside his experience, and he fell back on advisors who were themselves both from conviction and interest prejudiced in their views. Moreover, Larrazolo was sincerely concerned by the radicalism of the I. W. W. whose leaders were active in fomenting the strike and by evidence of communist influence, which he believed was at work throughout the country.

The governor did not wait for the strike to be called but attempted to forestall it. In October he issued a proclamation telling the miners that they were being victimized by Bolsheviki influences and warning them that if they did strike he would tolerate neither violence nor intimidation. The miners, heedless of the admonition, struck. Governor Larrazolo replied with a declaration of martial law in McKinley and Colfax counties. At his request, the United States government sent troops from Fort Bliss. In general this “strong” action was applauded by Republicans and Democrats alike, but the miners did find a champion. A. T. Hannett, who himself was to be governor of New Mexico, was in 1919 mayor of Gallup and attorney for miners in that area. He was as skilled in the use of words as weapons as Larrazolo, himself, and as exuberant in battle. He found martial law offensive, unnecessary and unconstitutional. Although written more than thirty years ago, the letters exchanged by the mayor and governor still strike fire revealing something of the

36. *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, October 26, 1919.

quality of the men and recalling the flavor of yesterday when political battle was more robust although not necessarily more lethal than it is today.<sup>37</sup>

The strike and martial law both came to an end without permanent damage to the institutions of the United States. Reading of it today prompts reflection on a saying of the French, "the more things change the more they are the same."

*The Special Session.* As he entered upon the second year of his administration, Larrazolo could regard the record of his first as good. The regular legislative session had been reasonably successful with governor and the majority party leaders working in harmony; patronage problems had been settled without serious party rifts and although the Spanish speaking element had been given greater recognition than under Lindsey, the Democratic prophecy that the state government would be "Mexicanized" was proved groundless; his leadership in the League of Public Lands and cordial relations maintained with the President of Mexico<sup>38</sup> brought to Governor Larrazolo a reputation extending beyond the borders of the state. The summoning of federal troops to oppose the striking miners was generally applauded as evidence of soundness in regard to property rights and alertness to the Bolshevik peril. Nineteen-hundred and nineteen had been good to Octaviano Larrazolo.

Early in nineteen-twenty clouds gathered. The recently enacted state income tax law had run into trouble. As is so frequently the case in regard to tax measures, possible loopholes were found, this time by attorneys of the mining interests. A suit to test the legality of the law was threatened. And at about the same time state action on the Nineteenth Amendment was being urged. Generally speaking the Spanish speaking people of New Mexico opposed women's participation in politics. It violated deeply imbedded mores. Governor Larrazolo shared this feeling. However, at a Republican district committee conference held in Denver during January, 1920, he was apparently convinced that the party could ill afford to permit the Democrats to claim credit for having given "votes to women." Speaking at the conference he declared that although formerly opposed to women's suffrage he now favored it.<sup>39</sup> There were other problems. Radicalism had somehow survived the coal strike, the veterans in-

37. Unfortunately lack of space forbids printing the letters in full and to edit them is to trifle with productions that are in their way masterpieces. The curious may find them in newspapers of the time—among others Hannett's letter in the *Albuquerque Evening Herald* of January 1, 1920 and Larrazolo's reply, *Gallup Herald*, January 10, 1920.

38. For Governor Larrazolo's activities in promoting friendship with Mexico see Córdova, A. C., *Octaviano Larrazolo*, pp. 86, 87.

39. *Santa Fe New Mexican*, January 9, 1920.



terests needed further attention and a number of problems of local interest could not be solved without legislative action. The governor resolved on a special session of the legislature. It convened February 16, 1920 and was presented with the following agenda.

1. Ratification of the Nineteenth (woman's suffrage) Amendment.
2. Provide for the defense of the state against external or internal enemies.
3. Authorize counties and cities to levy special taxes for public health purposes.
4. Revise the recently passed income tax law to meet the threat of unconstitutionality.
5. To provide for the implementation of the soldiers' settlement bill passed in the regular session.

Reviewing the special session thirty years later, one of the most amazing aspects was the speed with which it dispatched its business. Governor Larrazolo had carefully prepared the ground. To save expense he had persuaded employees of the state house to serve the legislature without additional pay. Thus no time was taken in wrangling over staff jobs. The bills covering the governor's recommendation were drawn and ready and the legislature itself was persuaded to adopt the organization of the regular session. As a consequence of this careful preparation, the legislature was ready for business the opening day and concluded its work within the seven day limit the governor had set.

But the seven days, fleeting though they were, were yet long enough to open a breach between the governor and the stalwarts among the party leaders. Most of Larrazolo's program was accepted and acted upon favorably. Two measures, however, caused trouble. These were the ratification of the woman's suffrage amendment and the strengthening of the income tax law. As previously indicated, the idea of women in politics violated the mores of the Spanish-American population. Consequently they opposed ratifying the amendment and the party leaders fully aware of the state's voting pattern, and seeing, no doubt, in their mind's eye the majestic Republican minorities in such "Spanish" counties as Valencia, Rio Arriba, Santa Fe and San Miguel, felt the issue might well have been left dormant. Since it had not been, they had ready the means by which it could be rocked back to sleep. True, as Governor Larrazolo reminded them, a party plank favoring the amendment had been adopted in 1918 and this was 1920; but, said leaders from the sections opposing action, ratification had not been pledged; it would be sufficient if the whole matter were submitted to the people.

Octaviano Larrazolo whatever his faults—and he had some—seldom evaded an issue. Generally he was for a thing or against it, and in support or opposition he was vigorous and sometimes ruthless. Now with all the ardour of a recent convert, he favored ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. He demanded support and under pressure the state leaders, more sensitive than those of the county to the party's national needs and in less danger of local reprisal, came to his aid. George Craig, state chairman and Holm Bursum, national committeeman, arrived in Santa Fe. The governor, himself, held a series of conferences with legislative leaders. The amendment was ratified, although in the house only by virtue of Democratic aid. All the votes against the measure were cast by Spanish speaking members. Governor Larrazolo won his battle but in doing so offended elements in the party and exhibited a troublesome spirit of independence.

The suffrage controversy by itself, however, might not have been overly damaging. The income tax was another matter. The corporations of the state, led by the mine owners, had threatened suit to test its constitutionality. Governor Larrazolo asked the legislature to meet the challenge by strengthening the law. The party leadership had other plans. They, too, were resolved to settle the matter, but in the interests of the corporations. The existing law was dutifully repealed but instead of a new and stronger measure, the Barnes bill was introduced. The Barnes bill provided that a commission should be appointed to study the whole matter. No funds were provided the commission. Thus instead of an income tax that might or might not be unconstitutional there was no income tax at all, only a commission without the means to act. It was a well conceived plan and equally well executed. The Barnes bill passed both houses of the legislature. But Governor Larrazolo had called the legislature to strengthen not repeal the income tax. He vetoed the measure repealing the law passed during the regular session. Thus there was still a state income tax. The courts would determine its constitutionality.

The special session revealed the stature of the governor. Although a politician to his finger tips and both willing and adept in the use of political techniques including compromise, he could not be controlled. Nor was he always diverted from a course by mere arguments of political expediency. He had been accused of wishing to Mexicanize the state and of beating the drums of racial prejudice in order to gain votes. Yet on the woman's suffrage issue he was resolute in spite of opposition from both the leaders and rank and file of the

Spanish-American people. The "regulars" led by Senator Fall nominated him. As a politician he knew the power of the interests that they represented. Yet on the income tax law he defied that power.

The vested interests of the state did not forgive Governor Larrazolo either his independence nor the balking of their attack on the income tax. True, considering his action during the coal strike and his fervent attack on radicalism it might be supposed that he merited some measure of gratitude. They had received at least an even break. But power in being does not count gratitude among the virtues, and privilege is not content with an even break. The *status quo* ceases to be the *status quo* if it grants concessions. So Octaviano was not forgiven; he was preferable to Lindsey, but he was not forgiven.

*The Battle for Renomination.* The special session of the legislature was held in February. Spring brought the old guard's opposition to Larrazolo's renomination into the open. In the summer the governor began to fight back. On July 24th he announced that he was a candidate for re-election and outlined a program for his second term.

1. The enactment of a primary election law.
2. Revision of the tax law so that the burden of taxation would be more equitably distributed.
3. A non-partisan board for the management of state lands and land revenue.
4. Cession of federally owned lands to the state.
5. A complete budget system.
6. Improvement of the state schools and higher salaries for teachers.
7. Adjustment of differences between capital and labor.
8. Economy and abolition of superfluous offices.
9. Assistance to ex-service men.

It was a good platform—much of it would be as good in 1952 as in 1920—but it was also a declaration of war upon the party's "inner circle," the men who had nominated him two years earlier. The tax plank was a continuation of the struggle begun during the special session and the primary was generally unpopular among the conservatives. The regulars accepted the challenge. They worked throughout the summer with the precision and sure hand of men who had learned from long experience. In August Senator Fall, who two years before had insisted that his own election required the nomination of Larrazolo, came home for what he called a reconnaissance mission—the main feature of which was to study the opposition to the governor's renomination.<sup>40</sup> Although the Senator did not openly commit himself after this reconnaissance, his closest political allies

40. Santa Fe *New Mexican*, August 2, 1920.

continued the fight on Larrazolo. It was suggested the governor run for Congress. He rejected the compromise in characteristically colorful phrases: "neither does the siren's voice or the whispering of flattery fall upon kindly ears in my case. That appeal might be well made to the ambitious youth, but not to one who has passed the meridian of his life."<sup>41</sup>

As the date for the state convention neared, the governor pressed the fight. He asked his opponents<sup>42</sup> to meet him in open discussion of the merits and faults of his administration. The challenge was rejected. No one was willing to meet "the silver tongued orator" in public debate, and besides the regulars had their own plan of campaign—one calling for a war fought on grounds of their own choosing—the county conventions. Thus Holm Bursum prevented Socorro county from instructing for the governor and Bernalillo, though it praised his administration, instructed for Hughes.

The state convention was held in early September. On the first ballot Governor Larrazolo received 559 votes, on the second 564. He needed only thirty-one more votes. But at this point the Old Guard lines held firm, and on the third ballot came the command to switch. San Miguel, 129 votes, and Bernalillo, 91 votes, led the break from the candidates whom they had originally supported. Judge Mechem was nominated.

The reasons for the party's refusal to nominate Governor Larrazolo are, as is nearly always the case in regard to politics, complex. The governor himself believed that the mining interests, offended by his veto of the bill repealing the income tax, constituted the hard core of the opposition. This is quite probably true but the mining interests could not have defeated him had they not represented views generally held by the corporate and large property interests of the state. Simply stated, Larrazolo was at the same time too liberal and too independent for the inner circle of party leaders. They had selected him in 1918 as an improvement over Lindsey and because they needed him to give strength to Fall. In 1920 the need was not so pressing. The trend was toward the right. It was the year of the return to normalcy. To the Republican leaders normalcy meant a governor who fully shared their own economic and political philosophy. That was not Octaviano Larrazolo.

41. Santa Fe *New Mexican*, August 12, 1920.

42. H. B. Hening and Tom Hughes of the Albuquerque *Evening Herald*, W. A. Hawkins, Eduardo Otero of Los Lunas and Secundino Romero, leader of the regular organization in San Miguel County, were named in the challenge. Santa Fe *New Mexican*, August 17, 1920.

## OCTAVIANO LARRAZOLO

*Later Years.*<sup>43</sup> Larrazolo accepted defeat in good part and supported Mechem in the latter's successful campaign for election. After he left office he lived for a short time in El Paso, Texas, in order to attend to business interests in Mexico. In 1922 he returned to New Mexico, and to politics. In 1923 his name was submitted to President Harding for consideration as governor of Puerto Rico. The New Mexico legislature passed a resolution recommending the appointment. It was also urged by New Mexico's Congressional delegation and endorsed by western governors who had met Larrazolo at the Salt Lake City conference. However, Horace Towner, chairman of the Insular Affairs Committee of the House, received the appointment. In 1924 Larrazolo was nominated by the Republicans for Justice of the Supreme Court, but defeated by his Democratic opponent.

In 1928 Octaviano Larrazolo ran for office for the last time. Urged by Bronson Cutting, he reluctantly entered the race for United States Senator. His one stipulation was characteristic. Racially the Republican ticket must be evenly balanced. He was elected but was able to attend only one session of the Senate, where he introduced a bill for the establishment in New Mexico of an industrial school for Spanish-American boys. Shortly after the introduction of the bill, illness forced him to return to his home in Albuquerque where he died April 8, 1930.<sup>44</sup>

---

43. Following the pattern adopted for previous sketches of New Mexico's governors, this study can only summarize Larrazolo's political activities after 1920.

44. The limits of a "political study" have excluded any attempt to portray the private life of Governor Larrazolo. He had married twice. His first wife was Miss Rosalía Cobos of San Elizario. Two children were born of the first marriage: Juan, deceased and José María, a resident of Las Cruces, New Mexico. After the death of his first wife, Mr. Larrazolo married Miss María García also of San Elizario. Five children of the second marriage are now living: H. A. Larrazolo, a manufacturer of Mexico City, Carlos, a resident of San Francisco, Ralph, a radio technologist of Alamogordo, Octaviano, a geologist of Albuquerque and Paul, an attorney of Belen, New Mexico.









PUBLICATIONS OF THE DIVISION OF  
GOVERNMENT RESEARCH

UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO  
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

IN PRINT

---

---

7. THE DIRECT PRIMARY IN NEW MEXICO, by Paul Beckett and Walter L. McNutt, January, 1947, 50 cents.
9. THE SCHOOL BOARD AND THE SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER, by J. W. Diefendorf, April, 1947, 50 cents.
10. THE POPULATION OF NEW MEXICO, by Paul Walter and Ross Calvin, June, 1947, 50 cents.
13. THE GOVERNMENT OF NEW MEXICO, by Thomas C. Donnelly, November, 1947, \$4.00.
14. PRESS LAW HANDBOOK, by Frederick C. Irion, December, 1947, \$1.00.
15. SOME FACTORS IN THE INDIAN PROBLEM IN NEW MEXICO, by Florence Hawley, May, 1948, 50 cents.
17. STATE GOVERNMENT TODAY, by Roy V. Peel, September, 1948, \$3.00.
18. PUBLIC WELFARE PROBLEMS IN NEW MEXICO, by Helen Ellis, November, 1948, 50 cents.
19. GOVERNOR RICHARD C. DILLON: A STUDY IN NEW MEXICO POLITICS, by Charles B. Judah, December, 1948, 50 cents.
20. THE REPUBLICAN PARTY IN NEW MEXICO: A CHALLENGE TO CONSTRUCTIVE LEADERSHIP, by Charles B. Judah, June, 1949, 50 cents.
22. A SURVEY OF LICENSING IN NEW MEXICO, by Frederick C. Irion, October, 1949, 50 cents.
24. AN APPRAISAL OF NEW MEXICO LABOR LEGISLATION, by Nathaniel Wollman, May, 1950, 50 cents.
25. NEW MEXICO'S PROPOSED PREPRIMARY DESIGNATING CONVENTION, by Charles B. Judah and Oliver E. Payne, October, 1950, 25 cents.
26. ARTHUR T. HANNETT: GOVERNOR OF NEW MEXICO, by Robert Thompson and Charles Judah, November, 1950, 50 cents.
27. THE POTASH INDUSTRY, by Louis H. Kurrelmeyer, February, 1951, \$1.50.
28. ALBUQUERQUE AND THE CITY MANAGER PLAN—1917-1948, by Dorothy I. Cline, April, 1951, 50 cents.
29. PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS IN NEW MEXICO—1951, by Charles B. Judah, August, 1951, 25 cents.
30. MUNICIPAL LAW MANUAL, by Frederick C. Irion, January, 1952, \$1.50.
31. HIGHWAY FINANCE IN NEW MEXICO, by Julian S. Duncan, Harold O. Staus, and Katharine Nutt, August, 1952, 50 cents.
32. OCTAVIANO LARRAZOLO—A POLITICAL PORTRAIT, by Alfred C. Córdova and Charles B. Judah, November 15, 1952, 50 cents.





University of  
Connecticut  
Libraries

---



39153005084779

